Study reveals unrealistic public expectations regarding implants

By DT Asia Pacific

HONG KONG: Dental implants are gaining increasing popularity in the treatment of partially dentate or edentulous patients, and both the industry and dental professionals offer detailed information about implant materials, functions and procedures.

Yet, many people are not well informed and tend to overestimate the functionality of implants, while underestimating the expertise needed for implant dentistry. These are the findings of a qualitative study conducted at the University of Hong Kong.

The researchers aimed to evaluate the public’s acquisition of information and their perceptions regarding dental implants, as well as the effects of these perceptions on their care-seeking and decision-making behaviour.

The study examined a sample of 28 adults between 35 and 64 years old who had never been engaged in a dentistry-related job. Moreover, for inclusion in the study, participants had to have at least one missing tooth and to have heard about dental implants, but they were not told anything about the functionality of implants.

The study revealed that patients tend to overestimate the functionality of implants, new research has shown. (© Warren Goldswain)

Halitosis association launched

In order to address the lack of scientific data on halitosis, the International Association for Halitosis Research (IAHR) was officially formed on 5 June at a meeting of leading halitosis researchers during EuroPerio8 in London. As new insights into the problem of bad breath are rapidly expanding, the IAHR aims to promote research on all aspects of halitosis and its related issues and to distribute and publicise the research. “Not only do we need to create awareness among the public, but we should also enhance the information and treatment advice for professionals,” president Dr Edwin Winkel from the Netherlands said.

Despite affecting a vast number of people worldwide, sound epidemiologic data on halitosis is rare. While in 10 cases of halitosis are attributable to tongue coating, gingivitis, periodontitis and other conditions in the oral cavity, a minority of cases are caused by systemic diseases or conditions.
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BRISBANE, Australia: After five years of construction, one of Australia’s largest and most advanced oral health centres has opened this month at the University of Queensland’s Herston campus in Brisbane. The new facility is intended to improve access to dental care for people in Australia’s second largest state and northern New South Wales, as well as to facilitate dental training and research.

Originally set for completion in 2012, construction was expanded due to funding issues, as well as commissioning and certifications for the fit out taking longer than usual.

The university is reported to have spent a total of A$139 million (US$105 million) on the new complex, of which two-thirds were provided by the federal and local governments. It will replace the university’s former dental school at Turbot Street, which was returned to the Queensland government last December, and offer general dentistry services, as well as a number of specialised treatments, including orthodontics and periodontics.

Equipment has been increased with twice as many chairs available for treatment and the acquisition of advanced diagnostic equipment, like microscopes and intra-oral cameras.

Furthermore, surgeons will be able to record and stream procedures with the help of two demonstration chairs boasting state-of-the-art recording equipment.

“UQ has been at the forefront of dental innovation and research,” Vice-Chancellor Prof. Peter Høj said. “We were the last cohort to use the old pump-room, so we are looking forward to having two fully equipped posterior units and two slow-speed units equipped with the latest technology.”

Plans to update the university’s dental facilities, which were established in the 1930s, were in the making for almost 20 years. Once the design had been awarded to Brisbane architects Cox Rayner, constructions for the new oral health centre began in 2011. The site finally became operational late last year. Among other things, it will connect the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital to the Mayne Medical School.

“The UQ Oral Health Centre has been a significant project over several years and it is a fine facility of which we can be proud,” Vice-Chancellor Prof. Peter Høj commented.

“UQ has been at the forefront of Australian dentistry for the best part of a century, and this ensures we continue to set the standard for coming generations.”

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never received one or had any dental consultation regarding dental implants.

The participants were divided into six focus groups and had to discuss dental implants and their individual knowledge about them. All of the group discussions were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic content analysis following a grounded theory approach.

The Chinese research team found that the participants acquired information on dental implants through various means, such as patient information boards, printed advertisements, social media, and personal connections.

According to the researchers, the participants expected dental implants to restore patients’ appearance, function and quality of life to absolute normality. “They regarded dental implants as a panacea for all cases of missing teeth and overestimated their functions and longevity,” the scientists stated.

The participants further underestimated the expertise needed to carry out the clinical procedures to place an implant. However, they were deterred from seeking dental implant treatment by the high costs, invasiveness of the procedure, risks and possible complications.

Overall, the study found that the public is exposed to information of varying quality and has some unrealistic expectations regarding dental implants. Such perceptions may shape their care-seeking behaviours and decision-making processes in one way or another, the researchers said.

“The views and experiences gathered in this qualitative study could assist clinicians to better understand the public’s perspectives, facilitate constructive patient-dentist communication, and contribute to the creation of positive clinical experiences in implant dentistry,” they concluded.

The study, titled “Public perceptions of dental implants: A qualitative study,” was published online on 8 May in the Journal of Dentistry.